Review Article

Promoting extensive reading in EFL contexts: A review of benefits, challenges, and recommendations

La Men [1]* 🆔, Kimkong Heng [2,3] 🆔

[1] The Westline School, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA
[2] Faculty of Education, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA
[3] Cambodian Education Forum, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA
*Corresponding Author: menlateacherofenglish@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Extensive reading (ER) is a form of reading to encourage learners to read pleasurably without having pressure to take a test after reading. The core principle of ER is that students are motivated to read the materials they select by themselves, and such materials are easy and interesting for them. This article aims to discuss the benefits and challenges related to the implementation of ER in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. The article is designed as a narrative literature review drawing on secondary sources to answer the research questions. The review shows that ER has five main benefits, such as improving reading fluency, enhancing listening, speaking, and writing skills, improving vocabulary, enhancing reading motivation, and improving English proficiency. While ER provides many benefits, promoting it or implementing ER in EFL contexts is not without challenges. Key challenges are varied, including limited time for both teachers and students, lack of relevant reading materials, delayed impact of ER, legitimacy issues with ER, lack of support from school leaders for ER, limited knowledge about ER, limited personal experience with ER, lack of motivation for ER, limited professional development opportunities for ER, and the demanding nature of ER principles. The article provides eight recommendations to promote ER, such as raising awareness of ER, planning a budget for ER, assigning a responsible and competent person for ER, creating a community of practice on ER, putting ER into the school curriculum, integrating technology to support ER, fostering students' motivation and personal investment in reading, and promoting research on ER. The article contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ER by providing a synthesis of key benefits, challenges, and recommendations. It concludes with implications for promoting ER in EFL contexts and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: extensive reading, extensive reading programs, EFL contexts, benefits, challenges, recommendations

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INTRODUCTION

Extensive reading (ER) is defined as reading for pleasure where students are encouraged to select the reading materials by themselves, and the materials should be easy and interesting for them (Bamford & Day, 1997). For decades, ER has played a significant role in English language education, whether in first language, English as a second language, or English as a foreign language (EFL) (Davis, 1995). Many studies have found that ER provides numerous benefits for English learners (Bamford & Day, 2004; Davis, 1995; Day & Bamford, 2010; Day et al., 1998; Macalister, 2010; Renandya, 2007, 2015, 2017; Renandya et al., 2021; Waring & Husna, 2019; Zhou & Day, 2021, 2023). For example, researchers, such as Bamford and Day (2004), Renandya (2007, 2015, 2017), and Renandya et al. (2021, 2025), have stated that ER significantly improves learners' reading comprehension and fluency. They also noted that it indirectly enhances other language skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing. Moreover, they have argued that ER can enrich vocabulary and promote positive attitudes toward reading, making it a valuable approach to language acquisition.

While ER is crucial, research has shown that there are challenges to implementing it in EFL contexts. Key challenges that have been identified included a lack of time for both teachers and students to implement ER, a lack of relevant reading materials for ER, a lack of support from school leaders for ER implementation, limited knowledge about ER, limited experience with ER, and a lack of motivation for ER (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). To address these challenges, researchers have suggested various strategies, such as integrating ER into the curriculum, providing teacher training and professional development, increasing access to diverse and engaging reading materials, and fostering school-wide support for ER (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Rodrigo et al., 2007; Waring & Husna, 2019; Waring & McLean, 2015; Wulyani et al., 2022; Renandya et al., 2021, 2025).

Despite an extensive body of research on ER, there appears to be a lack of a synthesized account of the benefits, challenges, and recommendations when it comes to integrating ER into EFL classroom contexts. This article aims to address the knowledge gap by reviewing previous research on ER. It aims to answer three research questions:

1. What are the benefits of ER?

2. What are the key challenges in implementing extensive research in EFL contexts?

3. What are the recommendations for promoting extensive research in EFL contexts?

This article is designed as a narrative review. It draws on secondary data to provide a synthesis of the benefits of ER, challenges in implementing it, and recommendations to promote it in EFL contexts. The goal of the article is to provide a comprehensive review of the benefits, challenges, and recommendations regarding the integration of ER in EFL classrooms. In what follows, the article discusses a theoretical background by defining ER and outlining characteristics of successful ER programs. It then briefly describes the research methods used in this article to identify the key benefits, challenges, and recommendations for promoting ER or implementing ER programs in EFL contexts. The article concludes with some recommendations for promoting ER and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Davis (1995) defined ER as extra sessions attached to an English course, allowing learners to read for enjoyment as many books as they can at their own time, without the pressure of testing or marks; therefore, students are only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide them encouragement and ensure that materials are available for students to read. Similarly, Bamford and Day (1997) defined ER as a teaching approach integrated into school programs to encourage students to read extensively and enjoyably. They further explained that the main aim of reading is to understand the meaning of the whole text rather than the meaning of each word or sentence. ER is sometimes called pleasure reading (Mikulecky, 1990) or free voluntary reading (Krashen, 1993). Likewise, Renandya (2017, p. 4) proposed the definition of ER as "reading for general information and is often associated with the enjoyment that one derives from reading." He added that when students read extensively, "they choose to read easy and enjoyable materials in order to build their fluency in reading" (p. 4). In implementing ER, "the aim is not to teach specific language skills or comprehension strategies but to help them become fluent readers" (Renandya, 2017, p. 4).

In promoting ER or implementing ER programs, ER materials are essential. Graded readers, both printed and digital books, have been frequently mentioned as the main sources for most ER programs (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Gillis-Furutaka, 2015; Waring, 2017). According to the Extensive Reading Foundation (2011), graded readers are divided into types of fiction and non-fiction, written particularly for language learners to enhance their reading speed and reading fluency, and to allow learners to get exposed to real reading for pleasure. There are several benefits of using graded readers, including allowing learners to encounter numerous comprehensible languages, allowing learners to plan their reading level by level, providing easy and interesting reading materials, and creating a connection between simplified text and simplified text (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Waring, 2017).

Regarding the characteristics of successful ER programs, a number of researchers have discussed the principles that make ER programs successful. Key among them are Bamford and Day (2004, pp. 2-3), who put forward 10 principles for successful ER programs. These principles include

(1) students read as much as possible perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom,

(2) a variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways,

(3) students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them,

(4) the purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding. These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the student,

(5) reading is its own reward. There are few or no follow-up exercises to be completed after reading,

(6) reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult,

(7) reading is individual and silent, at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses,

(8) reading speed is usually faster rather than slower as students read books and other material that they find easily understandable,

(9) Teachers orient students to the goals of the program, explain the methodology, keep track of what each student reads, and guide students in getting the most out of the program, and

(10) the teacher is a role model of a reader for students–an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.

Other characteristics of successful ER programs pertain to criteria such as

(1) fluent comprehension,

(2) high-speed reading,

(3) reading of large amounts of text, and

(4) a focus on the meaning of text (Waring & McLean, 2015).

For example, Waring and McLean (2015) explained that an effective ER should focus on smooth, fluent reading, focusing on understanding meaning with minimal interruptions. This differentiates it from intensive reading (IR), which involves a slower and more detailed focus on language forms. In addition, fluent reading improves skill development and creates a positive feedback loop, fostering both comprehension and reading speed over time.

METHOD

This article utilized a narrative literature review method (Grant & Booth, 2009) to gather relevant information to achieve the research aim, which is to discuss the key benefits and challenges concerning the promotion of ER in EFL classroom contexts. As noted by Denney and Tewksbury (2013), a literature review is useful in providing information about

> "What is known about a topic, and what is not yet known, thereby setting up the rationale or need for a new investigation, which is what the actual study to which the literature review is attached seeks to do" (p. 218).

To search for relevant studies for the review, we mainly used Google Scholar, as it provides access to a range of scholarly works such as research articles, books, and conference papers. We used a

Table 1. Benefits of ER

No	Benefits	Sources
1	Improving reading fluency	Bamford and Day (2004), Beglar and Hunt (2014), Extensive Reading Foundation (2011), Ferdila (2014), Leung (2002), Robb and Ewert (2024), & Zhou and Day (2023)
2	Improving listening, speaking, and writing	Bamford and Day (2004), Day and Bamford (2010), Extensive Reading Foundation (2011), Renandya (2007), Renandya et al. (2018), & Zhou and Day (2021, 2023)
3	Improving vocabulary	Bamford and Day (2004), Day and Bamford (2010), Ferdila (2014), Robb and Ewert (2024), & Zhou and Day (2021, 2023)
4	Improving reading motivation	Bamford and Day (2004), Brown (2009), Day and Bamford (2010), Ferdila (2024), Iwata (2022), Mikami (2020), Permatasari and Wienanda (2023), Robb and Ewert (2024), & Rodrigo et al. (2014)
5	Improving English proficiency	Aka (2019), Bamford and Day (2004), Chang and Renandya (2017), Day and Bamford (2010), Iwahori (2008), Renandya (2007), & Zhou and Day (2021, 2023)

number of keywords in our search. They included 'benefits of extensive reading,' 'challenges in implementing extensive reading,' 'challenges in integrating extensive reading,' 'extensive reading in EFL contexts,' and 'recommendations for integrating extensive reading.' No specific inclusion or exclusion criteria, commonly utilized in systematic reviews, were employed. Our aim was to include as many articles or relevant documents as possible to allow for a comprehensive review of relevant literature. However, most of the documents included in the review were peer-reviewed journal articles, suggesting that the quality of this review relied on research-based documents.

We used thematic analysis to analyze the selected research articles (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, after our literature search, a total of 46 documents were selected for review. To analyze these documents, we read and reread them to identify the key benefits, challenges, and recommendations in relation to the implementation or integration of ER in EFL classrooms. We analyzed these selected documents manually using Microsoft Word and Excel to support the thematic analysis. To improve the quality of the analysis, the authors engaged in reflexivity and peer debriefing or extensive peer discussion, strategies considered to be useful in ensuring rigor in research (Houghton et al., 2013). The results of the review are presented and discussed in the following sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Benefits of ER

As shown in **Table 1**, there are five key benefits of ER. These benefits are commonly discussed in the literature on ER. Each of these benefits is discussed in turn in this section.

Improving reading fluency

Many studies have shown that ER has a strong correlation with reading fluency (Bamford & Day, 2004; Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Ferdila, 2014; Leung, 2002; Robb & Ewert, 2024; Zhou & Day, 2023). For instance, Zhou and Day (2023) stated that the more they read, the better readers they become, resulting in better comprehension and leading to reading fluency improvement. Moreover, when learners engage with ER sufficiently, they are able to build reading fluency, allowing them to process the language automatically (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011). Likewise, as Beglar and Hunt (2014) noted, when learners read easily understood materials, they are able to fully comprehend them; therefore, they develop reading fluency. These are consistent with the ER principles (principle 1 and principle 4) mentioned above, suggesting that reading materials need to be easy and students need to be motivated to read as many easy books as possible.

Improving listening, speaking, and writing

ER is reported to have a strong influence on the other three macro skills, such as writing, speaking, and listening (Bamford & Day, 2004; Day & Bamford, 2010; Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Renandya, 2007; Renandya et al., 2018; Zhou & Day, 2021, 2023). For instance, it has been stated that ER can enable learners to read and listen to English at their own proficiency; therefore, they are able to build healthy reading and listening habits (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011). Likewise, Bamford and Day (2004) explained that when learners read extensively, they are able to improve their writing, speaking, and listening. Additionally, according to Renandya (2007), a group of Vietnamese teachers could earn high scores because they are avid readers. Overall, both anecdotal evidence (Renandya, 2007) and empirical research (Zhou & Day, 2021, 2023) have suggested that ER can improve listening, speaking, and writing.

Improving vocabulary

ER has also been reported to play a central role in enhancing students' vocabulary because through ER, students can get exposed to words or expressions repeatedly in the books they read, especially in graded readers (Bamford & Day, 2004; Day & Bamford, 2010; Ferdila, 2014; Robb & Ewert, 2024; Zhou & Day, 2021, 2023). As Day and Bamford (2010) stated:

> "Research in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) shows that we learn to read by reading. The more our students read, the better readers they become. An integral part of this is learning new vocabulary. One of the primary ways in which vocabulary is learned is through reading. Learners encounter the same words over and over again in context, which results in vocabulary learning."

Furthermore, when students read a lot, they get exposed to a lot of words and lexical patterns over time, allowing them to master their vocabulary and predict words and grammar in context (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

Improving reading motivation

ER also plays a pivotal role in motivating learners to read to create healthy reading habits (Bamford & Day, 2004; Brown, 2009; Day & Bamford, 2010; Ferdila, 2024; Iwata, 2022; Mikami, 2020; Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023; Robb & Ewert, 2024; Rodrigo et al., 2014). Researchers have claimed that ER provides a lot of potential benefits to learners; more importantly, learners can gain more motivation to read in English (Bamford & Day, 2004; Renandya, 2007; Waring & McLean, 2015). This motivation may be caused by their ability to comprehend the materials they read, since ER materials are carefully selected. Dörnyei (2001) noted that

> "Whether people decide to do something is determined by their belief about the values of action, and then their evaluation of whether they are up to the challenge and whether the support they are likely to get from the people and institutions around them is sufficient" (p. 8).

Improving English proficiency

ER is known to be an effective teaching approach that is very beneficial for learners to enhance their English proficiency in general

Table 2. Ten issues in implementing extensive reading (adapted from Renandya et al., 2021, 2025)

No	Key issues
1	Limited time for both teachers and students
2	Lack of relevant reading materials
3	Delayed impact of extensive reading
4	Legitimacy issues with extensive reading
5	Lack of support from school leaders for extensive reading
6	Limited knowledge about extensive reading
7	Limited personal experience with extensive reading
8	Lack of motivation for extensive reading
9	Limited professional development opportunities for extensive reading
10	Demanding nature of extensive reading principles

(Aka, 2019; Bamford & Day, 2004; Chang & Renandya, 2017; Day & Bamford, 2010; Iwahori, 2008; Renandya, 2007; Zhou & Day, 2021, 2023). For example, Zhou and Day (2021) found that after students read online extensively, their general English proficiency improved. Similarly, Zhou and Day (2023) conducted another study in a Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom and found that ER could improve students' Chinese proficiency in general. Additionally, Renandya (2007) noted that in order to gain high scores in English proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS, students must read extensively. Therefore, ER has a significant impact on English proficiency.

Challenges in Implementing ER

Despite the various benefits of ER, implementing it in EFL contexts is not without its challenges. This review showed that there are at least 10 key challenges or issues related to implementing ER in EFL classroom contexts (He & Green, 2012; Renandya et al., 2021, 2025; Waring & Vu, 2020). These 10 key issues are shown in **Table 2**.

Limited time for both teachers and students

Renandya et al. (2021, 2025) noted that teaching is a very busy job, and implementing ER requires time and effort. Wulyani et al. (2022) also found that teachers' workload impedes the success of ER implementation. In addition, Mardiyana et al. (2021) and Huang (2015) found that the failure of ER implementation tends to be related to students' workload or tight schedules. Thus, providing students with sufficient time for pleasure reading and reducing teachers' workload is also crucial for successful ER implementation.

Lack of relevant reading materials

The second issue indicated by Renandya et al. (2021, 2025) is the lack of relevant reading materials. They figure out that some schools in low-resourced countries may not be able to afford to purchase materials for ER. Likewise, many studies have found that the common cause of the failure of ER implementation is the lack of reading materials (Chang & Renandya, 2017; Davis, 1995; Leung, 2002; Mardiyana et al., 2021; Ounissi et al., 2025; Wulyani et al., 2022). Therefore, preparing a budget for ER is a very important thing to do in order to run ER programs.

Delayed impact of ER

Teachers may want to see their student's outcomes immediately, but the positive impact produced by ER needs a longer time, up to a year (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). It is argued that teachers oftentimes wish to see their labor result quickly, while ER implementation takes time and does not happen overnight (Renandya et al., 2021; Waring & Vu, 2020). Due to this issue, the school managements seem not to accept ER (Waring & Husna, 2019). Therefore, before implementing ER, all relevant parties, including teachers, school administrators, and school leaders, must be consistent with each other.

Legitimacy issues with ER

Traditionally, teachers and school administrators perceive teaching as standing in front of the class and providing class instruction explicitly (Ellis, 2017). Moreover, teachers are expected to actively engage students with class activities based on the course outlines, while ER requires students to select their own materials, which are easy and interesting to read extensively, both inside and outside the classroom (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). In our experience, one of us (the first author) used to be advised not to let the students do the ER in class since the school administrators worry that it could undermine the structure and purpose of the lesson. Therefore, fostering an accurate and supportive perception of ER among teachers and administrators is crucial for its successful implementation.

Lack of support from school leaders for ER

Another issue is related to the inadequate support from school management; some schools are well-resourced, and some are less well-resourced, and surprisingly, even well-resourced schools are reported not to get enough budget to promote ER (Renandya et al., 2021). Waring and Husna (2019) also found that the failure of the ER program in Indonesia was mostly due to institutional resistance. Likewise, Waring and Vu (2020) and Wulyani et al. (2022) revealed that the main challenge in promoting ER is due to the inadequate support from school leaders and the government. Receiving support from stakeholders, especially from school leaders and the government, is required in order to run it smoothly.

Limited knowledge about ER

Despite having ample materials and support, when lacking theoretical knowledge on ER, the chance of success is extremely small (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). Waring and Husna (2019) found that the hindrance of ER implementation is the fact that teachers do not have precise knowledge to run and manage this program.

Moreover, research has found that the failure of ER is due to the misconceptions of ER (Arai, 2019; Fan, 2023). Fan (2023) explained that most teachers conceptualized ER as the same as IR, reading for linguistic study instead of for information or pleasure. Additionally, Waring and Vu (2020) found that some EFL teachers in Vietnam still misunderstand the difference between IR and ER. To successfully implement ER, it requires time, effort, and, more importantly, a key person who has precise knowledge of it.

Limited personal experience with ER

Teachers' personal experience with ER plays an essential role in making ER implementation alive among various contexts (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). Likewise, Waring and Husna (2019) and Waring and Vu (2020) found that teachers in their study did not have experience with ER, and they felt less confident in running this program successfully. Teachers' personal experience is also a critical aspect that may lead to the success of ER implementation, since when putting it into practice, it requires teachers to be more flexible, and to be able to be flexible, teachers must have experienced it themselves.

Lack of motivation for ER

According to Renandya et al. (2021), motivation also plays a central role in sustaining learners' consistent reading habits. They further explained that teachers must help students select the right books to read, or they will not read when they cannot find books that they do not want to read. Furthermore, the lack of motivation is due in part to the fact that students receive too much workload, such as homework and tests (Huang, 2015). Huang (2015) argued that even if students read, they will not get scores from this activity, which is why they are not motivated to read. Lastly, students are not

motivated to read owing to the fact that they cannot understand the materials they read (Mohd Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Waring & Vu, 2020). Consequently, if the materials are linguistically demanding, the students will not read, since they are unable to comprehend the text they read.

Limited professional development opportunities for ER

Teachers are often not equipped with ample professional development; therefore, their knowledge about ER tends to be limited (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025). Some Indonesian teachers, for example, have never even heard the word 'extensive reading' (Waring & Husna, 2019). Additionally, Fan (2023)'s study found that Chinese EFL teachers need ER workshops in order to explore more about ER. Moreover, Waring and Puripunyavanich's (2025) study about EFL teachers in four different countries, such as Japan, Thailand, Mongolia, and Vietnam, revealed that more training must be provided to the teacher participants due to their limited knowledge about ER. This should be the starting point when we want to implement ER programs in schools.

Demanding nature of ER principles

Many teachers report that the 10 principles of ER, mentioned above, are too complex to apply, and they mistakenly perceive that all 10 principles need to be strictly applied to be successful (Renandya et al., 2021). Renandya et al. (2021) further stated that "these principles are cast in stone, they say. If one or two of these principles were ignored or misapplied, the program could no longer be called extensive reading" (p. 19). ER principles may be viewed as too complicated by teachers, which may hinder the implementation of ER programs (Renandya et al., 2021, 2025; Waring & McLean, 2015).

Recommendations for Promoting ER

To promote ER or implement ER programs effectively on a broader scale, the following recommendations should be considered by relevant stakeholders. These recommendations are drawn from a range of research studies, such as those by Elturki and Harmon (2020), Haider and Akhter (2012), Waring and Husna (2019), Extensive Reading Foundation (2011), Renandya et al. (2021, 2025), and Wulyani et al. (2022). **Table 3** shows these recommendations.

Raising awareness of the ER

To effectively promote ER, it is immensely important to raise awareness among stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011; Waring & Husna, 2019). Waring and Husna (2019) suggested that offering the first workshop about ER is able to raise interest, but more workshops are needed to fill the gap in stakeholders' knowledge about ER. Providing training and workshops is, therefore, an essential part of the implementation because it is hard for the participants, such as teachers, to fully understand everything about ER with only one workshop or training session. Moreover, from workshop to workshop, the trainers or experts also need to listen to the participants' concerns and how to improve their practices. Additionally, Elturki and Harmon (2020) suggested that in order to promote ER, stakeholders, especially the practitioners, ought to explore the existing literature on ER and engage in discussion about it.

Planning a budget for ER

Planning a budget for ER plays such a crucial role in promoting it in many contexts. The failure to promote ER was reported by several studies to be due to a lack of budget to support ER (Renandya et al., 2021; Waring & Husna, 2019; Wulyani et al., 2022). Therefore, stakeholders must work closely together to prepare an amount of money to set up the ER program. As can be seen from the second

Table 3. Recommendations for promoting extensive reading

No	Recommendations
1	Raising awareness of extensive reading
2	Planning a budget for extensive reading
3	Assigning a key person for extensive reading
4	Creating a community of practice on ER
5	Putting ER as a main part of the curriculum
6	Integrate technology to support ER
8	Fostering students' motivation and personal investment in reading

principle of a successful ER program proposed by Bamford and Day (2004), we must have enough materials for students to read. In other words, when students have access to a wide range of books they want to read, they tend to read more, leading to a successful ER program (Rodrigo et al., 2007).

Assigning a key person for ER

Promoting ER requires commitment, responsibility, time, clear objectives, and vision. To ensure the effectiveness of an ER program, a key person who has precise knowledge of the ER should be assigned to oversee the implementation of ER programs across the school (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011). This key person may be a class teacher who has been trained and equipped with knowledge about ER. As Rodrigo et al. (2007) stated, teachers play various roles in ER, including motivating learners, selecting and organizing reading materials, clarifying the purpose of reading activities, and serving as role models for students. Therefore, teachers have a central role in ensuring a successful ER program.

Creating a community of practice on ER

Creating a Community of Practice among teachers can be an effective way to foster the implementation of ER programs. By participating in training sessions, workshops, or virtual seminars on ER, or congress and conferences on ER (e.g., those conducted by Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011), teachers can build both foundational theoretical knowledge and stay updated on best practices (Elturki & Harmon, 2020; Waring & Husna, 2019). Additionally, as Elturki and Harmon (2020) suggested, some critical actionable activities that help promote ER in the real-world setting, including forming a working group to evaluate the current reading curriculum, assessing whether it is overly or solely focused on intensive reading, and exploring practical ways to balance it with ER, can help align teaching approaches with program goals. Conducting workshops where instructors collaborate to brainstorm methods for implementing ER and identify useful resources further promotes shared learning. Finally, creating opportunities for peer observations can allow teachers to explore diverse pedagogical applications of ER and reflect on their teaching practices (e.g., peer-coaching or peer-sharing). Together, these initiatives can foster a collaborative environment that supports professional growth, shared expertise, and the successful integration of ER into the curriculum.

Putting ER as a main part of the curriculum

To successfully promote ER, it must be integrated into the curriculum (Elturki & Harmon, 2020; Green, 2005; Waring & Husna, 2019). Green (2005) and Elturki and Harmon (2020) highlighted a critical idea that ER must be put as a central part of the curriculum. It is such a huge misunderstanding to see ER as just an extra activity (Green, 2005). As Waring and Husna (2019) suggested, ER should be introduced to all stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, school leaders, and even parents) so that it can be implemented on a schoolwide scale and perceived as a main part of the curriculum.

Integrating technology to support ER

Technology plays a critical role in language education in the present digital era, allowing learners to personalize their learning to

fit their preferences. Therefore, technology can also be used to enhance ER implementation, where teachers can use technology to leverage personalized learning, fun activities, and an efficient learning environment (Bui & Macalister, 2021; Mark & Bollen, 2019; Renandya et al., 2025; Sun, 2003). For instance, as Mark and Bollen (2019) and Renandya et al (2025) suggested, teachers can utilize an ER website, called Xreading (https://www.xreading.com), to encourage learners to engage in ER. Through this website and similar online resources, students can read numerous storybooks from different publishers (e.g., Cambridge University Press, National Geographic Learning, and many others). Additionally, Xreading can offer a learning management system (LMS) that allows school administrators, teachers, parents, and even students themselves to record reading progress. Moreover, learners can select plenty of books with different genres based on their preferences by using the Xreading website. Bui and Macalister (2021) and Sun (2003) found that learners tended to have positive attitudes toward ER when ER is connected with technology. Thus, technology is a critical assisting tool to promote ER in language education contexts.

Fostering students' motivation and personal investment in reading

Reading is essential for all learners as they progress in their academic journey (Mansor et al., 2013). Thus, it is important to promote students' motivation in reading. According to Blyseth (2015), motivation plays a pivotal role in sustaining reading habits and achieving success. Blyseth (2015) noted that the motivation to read can stem from internal, external, or a combination of both sources. Internal motivation arises from a personal willingness to read, driven by the sense of satisfaction it provides, whereas external motivation is influenced by external factors, such as the tangible benefits or rewards that reading offers (Blyseth, 2015). Furthermore, McLean (2014) proposed some elements that foster learners' motivation in reading, including the availability of a wide range of reading materials, which are interesting and graded into different levels, reading ability, positive attitudes toward reading, and a supportive environment. To promote ER among students, it is essential to foster and sustain their reading motivation and investment in reading.

Promoting research on ER

Promoting research on ER plays a significant role in achieving better outcomes. Beyond raising awareness, planning a budget, and appointing a key person for ER, research findings provide language educators, school administrators, and leaders with evidence-based insights to make informed decisions that lead to more effective and tailored ER programs (Waring & McLean, 2015). Consequently, promoting research on ER is critical for the success and sustainability of ER programs, as findings can help determine best practices, guide what should or should not be done, and ensure that resources are used efficiently.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review article has shown that ER plays a vital role in language education, especially in EFL contexts. ER serves as a useful tool to enhance learners' overall language proficiency, contributing to improvements in reading, listening, speaking, writing, and vocabulary. More importantly, research has consistently shown that learners tend to develop positive attitudes toward reading through ER. However, ER implementation is not without challenges. Key challenges include limited time for both teachers and students, lack of relevant reading materials, the delayed observable impact of ER, legitimacy issues with ER, lack of support from school leaders for ER,

limited knowledge about ER, teachers' limited personal experience with ER, lack of motivation for ER, limited professional development opportunities for ER, and the demanding nature of ER principles.

To promote ER in EFL contexts, this article has suggested eight key recommendations. First, it is important to raise awareness among all stakeholders, especially teachers, school leaders, students, and parents. Teachers play a pivotal role in promoting ER because they work closely with students and serve as primary motivators in fostering a reading culture. Therefore, providing teachers with adequate training and resources on ER is essential. Second, school leaders should provide sufficient budgets for supporting ER implementation, such as buying materials and setting up a library or a reading corner where students can read during their spare time. Third, a key person should be assigned to coordinate and monitor the ER program to ensure its smooth operation. In case there are issues that may arise during ER implementation, this key person can tackle the issues spontaneously. For example, when a school library is not available, the key person may lead students to read in other places that are available. Fourth, establishing a community of practice among teachers can greatly support the implementation of IR programs. Activities like workshops, conferences, peer observations, or peer-coaching, and curriculum evaluations help teachers share knowledge, refine strategies, and balance intensive and ER. This collaborative approach fosters professional growth and effective ER integration into the curriculum.

Fifth, to successfully promote ER, it must be integrated as a central part of the curriculum rather than treated as an extra activity. Educating all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and school leaders, ensures ER is implemented on a schoolwide scale and recognized as essential to the learning process. Sixth, integrating technology can significantly enhance ER by providing personalized, engaging, and efficient learning experiences. Platforms like Xreading enable students to access a vast library of storybooks from various publishers, track their reading progress through its LMS, and select books based on their preferences. Seventh, fostering students' motivation is key to developing strong reading habits. Motivation can come from personal interest or external rewards. Providing diverse, level-appropriate materials, building positive attitudes, and creating a supportive environment are essential for encouraging ER. Finally, research on ER should be promoted to identify effective strategies to promote ER or implement ER programs effectively. Evidence from such research can guide informed decision-making about ER and ensure ER-promoting initiatives are effectively implemented.

This article contributes to the existing body of research on ER and the integration of ER in EFL contexts. In particular, the article addresses the knowledge gap by providing a synthesized account of key benefits of ER, challenges in implementing it, and recommendations for promoting it in EFL classroom settings. It is argued that the insights provided by this article can be utilized to conduct further investigations into ER and ER implementation in EFL contexts. This line of inquiry will contribute to advancing knowledge about ER integration in EFL classrooms and how ER can be promoted in such settings.

Designed as a review article relying on secondary data, this article is not without limitations. As it is limited to secondary data and the documents available to the researchers during the review, future research should address this shortcoming. A systematic review is therefore recommended, as it will provide a more insightful and nuanced understanding of how ER can be effectively incorporated in EFL contexts. Empirical research that explores the implementation of ER in different national contexts, especially in resource-deficient contexts like Cambodia, is also recommended. It is also important to explore EFL teachers' and students' perceptions and challenges when implementing ER in their teaching and learning

contexts. Future research should also focus on examining practical recommendations to promote ER in contexts where a reading culture is lacking, to understand the challenges and strategies to promote ER, and to take advantage of the various benefits provided by ER.

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